

WORK SESSION OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL held Wednesday, October 11, 2017, for the purpose of meeting with representatives of Baltimore Washington Rapid Rail.

Mayor Jordan started the meeting at 8:04 p.m. It was held in the Multi-Purpose Room of the Greenbelt Community Center.

PRESENT WERE: Councilmembers Judith F. Davis, Konrad E. Herling, Leta M. Mach, Silke I. Pope, Edward V.J. Putens, Rodney M. Roberts and Mayor Emmett V Jordan.

STAFF PRESENT WERE: Nicole Ard, City Manager, Terri Hruby, Acting Director of Planning and Community Development and David E. Moran, Assistant City Manager.

ALSO PRESENT WERE: David Henley, Furqan Siddiqi and Earl Evan Jr., Baltimore Washington Rapid Rail (BWRR); George Boyce, Kris White, Laura Kressler, Bill Orleans, Aaron Marcavitch, Colin Byrd, Jean Snyder and Bob Snyder.

Mr. Henley presented a PowerPoint summarizing the proposed Baltimore-Washington Superconducting Maglev Project. He indicated that 60-70% of the alignment was underground.

Mayor Jordan asked about how BWRR was organized. Mr. Henley responded they were a private company. He anticipated the project would be funded with low interest loans from Japan Bank and the Federal government. Mayor Jordan asked about right of way (ROW) ownership. Mr. Henley responded that current railroad ROW is a mix of ownership types and this project would be similar. Mayor Jordan asked about the ticket cost to ride the Maglev. Mr. Henley responded that pricing would be competitive with Acela in the DC Market.

Mr. Roberts asked for clarification on the estimated vehicle trip reductions. Mr. Henley responded that it was estimated the Maglev would take 10% of car trips off the road. Mr. Roberts believed the Maglev was an elitist system. Mr. Henley responded that there was a market for some people to use this type of travel.

Ms. Davis noted that Council heard the whole project would be underground. Ms. Davis asked about the need for a third guideway for maintenance and cited the WMATA decision to not build a third tunnel as an example. Mr. Henley responded that this design was based on the Japan model and reported those trains don't break down. Mr. Siddiqi noted Japan had been operating their maglev for 52 years with no accidents and no fatalities.

Mr. Putens asked about the impact of earthquakes. Mr. Henley responded that this had to be included in the design. Mr. Siddiqi responded that concrete is designed to survive earthquakes. Mr. Putens asked about evacuation. Mr. Siddiqi responded that the tunnels and platforms are designed for egress.

Mr. Henley and Mr. Siddiqi encouraged Council to attend one of the upcoming open houses. Mr. Siddiqi indicated that the alignments would be narrowed to the three routes with the least impacts and this would be announced prior to the first open house.

Mr. Herling asked who would be the customer base. Mr. Henley responded that he would provide a ridership breakdown to Council.

Mayor Jordan noted that Council was familiar with the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) process. He asked who would decide on the final route. Mr. Henley responded that it was a joint process with Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) but the ultimate decision would be made by FRA.

Ms. Davis noted that projections for traffic diversion often don't materialize. She suggested that these funds could be invested in the current railroad system to make it better. Mr. Henley responded that BWRR saw this system as complimentary to existing rail systems.

Council reviewed the alignments. There was concern about the impacts of the proposed alignments.

Mayor Jordan asked about the impact on the WB&A trail alignment. Mr. Siddiqi responded that the bike path would be replaced and in tight areas the line would go underground.

Mr. Snyder asked how many jobs this project would provide. Mr. Siddiqi responded with estimates for job creation and indicated that greenhouse gases would be reduced by two million tons. Mr. Snyder expressed support for the project.

Mr. Boyce asked about plans for service levels. Mr. Siddiqi responded there would be 500 passengers every 15 minutes.

Ms. Kressler asked about tunnel depth. Mr. Henley indicated 80-100 feet deep in this area and it would be imperceptible in this area. Ms. Kressler asked about noise. Mr. Henley responded that BWRR would have to mitigate any noise impacts.

Mr. Marcavitch stressed the need for mitigation. He stated this project could impact Greenbelt but we won't have a nearby stop and receive any benefits. He asked if they had factored in sea level rise into their plans. Mr. Siddiqi responded that all the issues would need to be mitigated and this is why it takes so long to study.

Mr. Putens asked who would afford this service. Mr. Henley responded that they would provide those details. Mr. Putens questioned the benefits of this project.

Mayor Jordan asked about ongoing maintenance. Mr. Henley responded that rolling stock is replaced every 10 years and the system is closed every night for ongoing maintenance.

Mr. Roberts asked about a prior maglev proposal. Mr. Henley responded it had been around 20 years.

The meeting ended at 9:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*David E. Moran
Assistant City Manager*